

December 2014

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DDSN MEDICAL CONSULTANT

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HEALTH INFORMATION UPDATE

Notes for staff, consumers and members of the SCDDSN Community

Introduction:

Our care for our consumers strives to keep them well and do the right things when they get sick. When we look at things that are often problems for the people we care for several important problems stand out. One's we need to be careful about include:

- Dehydration
- Choking
- Aspiration
- Intestinal Obstruction

You can find some information about these topics in Health Information Updates from past years. Hydration/Intestinal Obstruction/Constipation.

Hydration:

We always need to watch people who start to reduce food intake to see if they have enough water. Fever, vomiting, diarrhea and even cough, runny nose make fluid intake important and we may be able to stop serious illness by giving fluid by mouth (or IV if more serious). If a person's fluid intake falls greatly please ask for help from your health team.

Choking:

Choking is when food or items that are swallowed block the persons airway. The correct response is the Heimlich maneuver. We learn it in first aid and need to be ready to use it if there is a sign of any choking. (See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/choking>). In our consumers the highest risk is in a person who steals food and hurries to swallow it – please watch them. Hot dogs and balls of peanut butter are high risk foods, please use small helpings!

Aspiration:

Aspiration happens when objects or material are sucked into the lungs and cause a reaction – often called aspiration pneumonia. This can be because the lungs get an infection or because the substance sucked in irritates the lungs. We need to avoid this if at all possible. Food is the most common material aspirated. We need to monitor feeding and make changes in amounts and texture and thickness of food. There are several good ways to do this. In the DDSN services the protocols and checklists and the help that Mika Walpole, OTR at Whitten Center can give are vital. Please enroll in her program. You can find her forms in the internal DDSN Webpage under “Forms.”

Intestinal Obstruction:

When the bowel gets blocked it may be simple constipation but can be serious bowel problems. Please help avoid this by giving plenty of fluids, providing a regular bowel-toileting timetable, monitoring for reduced bowel movements, vomiting or abdominal swelling. Early attention will help.

General:

There are several things to watch out for. Overall we need to recognize when our consumer has a change in health and follow-up. If you are worried, please discuss it with your health team.

We care for many persons who need us to check carefully. This population has aged as we provide good care and our challenge is to keep our standards up.

I am retiring this month and have enjoyed working with you all, and wish you all the best – keep the good work up. Thanks to Yolanda Goodwin for her help with typing these notes.

Graeme Johnson, MB.Ch.B